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**Building the  
Next L.A. Charter**

***DELIBERATIONS***

City of Los Angeles  
Charter Reform Commission

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# Executive Summary

## Building the Next L.A. Charter: Deliberations

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In September 1997, the City of Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission concluded its first phase of Charter study with the release of *Road to Decision*, a report that distilled the Commission's previous research into 10 key issues.

For the five months that followed, Commissioners closely examined the questions framed in *Road to Decision*, listening to public testimony and weighing the intricacies of each issue. Diverse viewpoints were solicited from City employees, retired and active elected officials, former and current department heads, business leaders, labor leaders, scholars, community activists and practitioners from other cities. The Commission also held seven public hearings in communities throughout L.A. to hear the opinions and suggestions of the City's most important stakeholders, its residents.

Today, the Commission stands at a crossroad, ready to make decisions that will carry Los Angeles into a new century.

**Whereas *Road To Decision* raised questions, this report sets out the problems to be solved and the decisions to be made.**





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*Building the Next L.A. Charter: Deliberations* identifies the three core problems that have emerged from the mass of information and testimony received by the Commission:

- The Charter is not a flexible document suitable for the next century.
- The allocation of powers among top City officials, particularly between the Mayor and the City Council, creates difficulties for effective governance.
- The Charter does not foster citizen participation.

Together, these challenges reflect the central values of accountability, efficiency and responsiveness that were incorporated into the Commission's mission statement early in the reform process. Under *Building the Next L.A. Charter*, they will structure the Commission's four-month-long deliberations, serving as the foundation of three key objectives for the Commission to meet:

- To design a simpler, more accessible Charter that preserves core protections while allowing flexibility in the design and operation of city government.
- To clarify the roles of key City officials, especially the Mayor and the City Council, so that their powers are appropriate to their tasks, and so that the public can clearly hold them accountable.
- To increase and improve the opportunities for citizen participation in the Charter.

The objectives laid out in *Building the Next L.A. Charter* do not intend to resolve current disagreements over public policy. They are intended, rather, to guide Commissioners in designing a better structure of city government so that it is a flexible, responsive instrument of the people's will.

At the end of the deliberation process in late spring, the Commission will present its preliminary recommendations to the public for comment. In the Fall, the Commission will submit its final recommendations to the City Council for review. From there, they will be placed on the ballot for public vote, putting the ultimate decision-making power in the hands of the people.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in a formal manner. The letter discusses the state of the Union and the progress of the government since the inauguration of the President on January 20, 1801.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 3, 1801. It discusses the state of the Treasury and the progress of the government since the inauguration of the President on January 20, 1801.

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10. The tenth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the State, dated January 3, 1801. It discusses the state of the State and the progress of the government since the inauguration of the President on January 20, 1801.



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## ➤ CHARTER REFORM IN PERSPECTIVE

The City of Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission is about to enter deliberations. After months of study, listening, and weighing the various issues in Charter reform, the Commission will now make decisions on a set of draft recommendations. The Commission's deliberations will begin in February. In June, the Commission will release a set of draft recommendations for public comment. In the Fall, the Commission will submit its revised recommendations to the City Council for review. The next step is placement on the April 1999 ballot. No change can be made to the City Charter without a vote of the people.

The Charter that governs the City of Los Angeles took effect in 1925. For its time, the Los Angeles Charter was a remarkable piece of work. It represented a deeply held conception of good government, built on what were then considered modern, even innovative principles of urban government. The powers of key City officials were carefully laid out. Checks and balances, and citizen oversight of departments through commissions were meant to prevent corruption and keep government operations visible to the community.

Even with the Charter, corruption occurred in Los Angeles, but it is testimony both to the Charter and to a vigilant community that Los Angeles managed to avoid some of the worst excesses of municipal malfeasance.

A useful Charter with detailed specifications of powers grew into an unwieldy document. Because hundreds of single, voter-approved changes were made over the next 72 years, the Charter lost much of its original coherence. New City obligations, including federal and state mandates, expanded the scope of the Charter. What had once been a vehicle for clean, modern government became an obstacle to effective, accountable government. This long, detailed Charter may provide many protections, but it also prevents the City government from becoming a flexible, responsive instrument of the people's will.

The first of these is the fact that the United States is a young nation. It has only been about 150 years since it was founded. This is a very short time in the history of the world. The second is the fact that the United States is a large nation. It covers a vast area of land. The third is the fact that the United States is a diverse nation. It is made up of many different peoples and cultures. The fourth is the fact that the United States is a powerful nation. It has a strong economy and a large military. The fifth is the fact that the United States is a free nation. It has a constitution that guarantees the rights of its citizens.

The sixth is the fact that the United States is a democratic nation. It has a system of government in which the people have the right to elect their representatives. The seventh is the fact that the United States is a peaceful nation. It has never been involved in a major war. The eighth is the fact that the United States is a progressive nation. It has been at the forefront of many of the most important developments in the world. The ninth is the fact that the United States is a nation of opportunity. It has provided a place where people can come and build a better life for themselves. The tenth is the fact that the United States is a nation of hope. It has the potential to become a truly great nation.

The United States is a nation of many firsts. It was the first nation to be founded on a written constitution. It was the first nation to abolish slavery. It was the first nation to send a man to the moon. It was the first nation to develop nuclear energy. It was the first nation to put a woman in the White House. It was the first nation to win the Nobel Peace Prize. It was the first nation to become a member of the United Nations. It was the first nation to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was the first nation to develop the Internet. It was the first nation to send a satellite into space. It was the first nation to develop a space shuttle. It was the first nation to develop a space station. It was the first nation to develop a space program. It was the first nation to develop a space agency. It was the first nation to develop a space station. It was the first nation to develop a space program. It was the first nation to develop a space agency.

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Improving the City Charter entails more than changing legal provisions or adding new ones. It is a task that requires the community to uncover what the deepest goals of the City government are today and will be for decades to come. Those who developed the Los Angeles Charter knew what their City needed—a vehicle for governing and fostering a growing and dynamic city.

But the Angelenos of today, while mindful of the need to prevent corruption, have been asking for a government that delivers services efficiently and fairly, that responds to the needs and wants of its citizens, and provides ways for the people to hold their leaders accountable.

The calls for a new Charter have come from many quarters and have many different, often conflicting, philosophies behind them. What are the common strands that tie these hopes together?

## ➤ **PREPARATION FOR DELIBERATION**

The City of Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission began to answer this question soon after its first meeting in November 1996. The Mission Statement adopted by the Commission read in part:

The mission of the Commission on Charter Reform is to undertake a comprehensive review of the Los Angeles City Charter, to evaluate what works well and what does not, and to address any impediments to the best possible government.

The goal of the Commission is to present a charter that clearly defines responsibility and accountability while providing the flexibility necessary to a changing society.

For nine months after adopting its mission statement, the Commissioners educated themselves and the public about the essential aspects of the Charter. These efforts, all held in public, included two full-day workshops on the Charter, 18 study group sessions on management, institutions, and participation, and seven public hearings throughout the City—in the East San Fernando Valley, the Eastside, the Harbor



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area, South Central, Mid City, the Westside, and in the Central San Fernando Valley.

In September 1997, the Commission issued *Road To Decision*, which set out 10 key issues in Charter reform.

#### 10 KEY ISSUES

**ISSUE 1:** Should the Los Angeles Charter be a broad or a detailed document?

**ISSUE 2:** Should the power of the Mayor be increased?

**ISSUE 3:** Should the City Attorney be elected or appointed?

**ISSUE 4:** Should the role of the City Council be changed?

**ISSUE 5:** Should commissions be retained, eliminated, or changed?

**ISSUE 6:** Should the election system for the City or the LA Board of Education be changed?

**ISSUE 7:** How should the Charter deal with neighborhood issues, including governance, services, land-use, and planning?

**ISSUE 8:** Should the Charter be changed to affect the way that services are delivered, and the way city employees are selected and managed?

**ISSUE 9:** Should a City Department of Finance be created?

**ISSUE 10:** How should the proprietary departments be governed and managed?

**SPECIAL ISSUE:** What role should the City Charter play in the LAUSD board of education?

This report also presented the Commission's understanding of the underlying goals of today's Charter reform:

If corruption was the great fear in 1925, then public disaffection from a government often seen as inefficient and unresponsive, and the tension between neighborhoods and the greater community are the concerns we must address today and in the future. Our challenge for the future is to accommodate the different aspirations of neighborhoods while maintaining an effective governing center that helps individuals, organizations, and communities to reach their goals.





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The purpose of *Road To Decision* was to examine the widest possible range of issues that had been raised by people inside and outside of City government, to refine these issues substantially, to hear from people who had been dealing with the issues on a day-to-day basis, and through that process to uncover the fundamental problems with the Charter. The Commission also reviewed the recommendations of previous Charter studies, going back to 1934, with special attention to the only comprehensive, albeit unsuccessful, effort at Charter reform, the 1969 Reining Commission.

At the 13 meetings conducted under *Road To Decision*, Commissioners heard from past and present elected officials, including the Mayor, members of the City Council, the City Attorney and City Controller. The Commission also heard from department general managers current and retired, community activists, and scholars. Commissioners actively questioned each of the guests, often eliciting new ideas and approaches. Public comment was invited at every session of the Commission, and a wide range of opinions was heard.

## ➤ CHALLENGES OF CHARTER REFORM

The Commission set out on the *Road To Decision* without preconceptions about what would ultimately emerge from that five-month process. The Commissioners listened and questioned, with the aim of assessing complicated and long-standing debates about the Charter. It was unknown whether historical arguments on each issue would be relevant to today's conditions. It was unknown whether contemporary views on the Charter were, in fact, based on accurate analyses of the City government, or simply rooted in long-standing assumptions. What are the real dimensions of widely discussed problems? What can the Charter actually do about those problems?

As expected, the Commission heard varying, and at times diametrically opposed, views about the reform of the Charter. Commissioners not only heard about the well-known weaknesses of the City Charter, but also about its enduring strengths.





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Many people, for example, characterized the Charter as out-of-date in its elaborate system of checks and balances. Others praised those very checks and balances for keeping Los Angeles relatively free of the sort of municipal corruption that has plagued many other big cities. While the Commission was told on numerous occasions that efficiency is hampered by Charter detail, the Commissioners also heard that some of these details provide crucial protections for the rights of City workers.

What emerged was the need for greater accountability, responsiveness, and efficiency in the Charter without jeopardizing its strengths, with the recognition that every word of the Charter was placed in that document by a vote of the people.

Charter reform is not a vehicle for settling the political or policy debates of today. Rather, it should create a framework under which future residents of the City can undertake and resolve their own debates. The Commission's task, and its opportunity, is to help the City deal with tough policy choices **by designing structures for decision and implementation**. The Charter cannot solve the community's problems, but can create the conditions under which the people can solve their own problems for decades to come.

## ➤ THE TASK AT HAND

*Road To Decision* raised questions. This report sets out problems to be solved, and decisions to be made. From the information and testimony the Commission has received and the study it has undertaken, three core **problems** have emerged:

- The Charter is not a flexible document suitable for the next century.
- The allocation of powers among top City officials, particularly between the Mayor and the City Council, creates difficulties for effective governance.
- The Charter does not foster citizen participation.



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These problems involve the values of accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness that are crucial to the Commission's mission. They are Charter problems, not disagreements over public policy. They are about the structure of governance and are crucial to the operations of the government. They have been discussed long enough to develop a substantial debate. Most of all, solving these Charter problems could offer substantial improvement in the governance of the City.

These three problems can structure deliberations, because as the Commission addresses each one, it will begin to find answers to all the questions raised in *Road To Decision*. In responding to these problems, the Commission will pursue the following **objectives**:

- To design a simpler, more accessible Charter that preserves core protections while allowing flexibility in the design and operation of City government.
- To clarify the roles of key City officials, especially the Mayor and the City Council, so that their powers are appropriate to their tasks, and the public can clearly hold them accountable.
- To increase and improve the opportunities for citizen participation in the Charter.





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## OBJECTIVE ONE

**TO DESIGN A SIMPLER, MORE ACCESSIBLE CHARTER THAT PRESERVES CORE PROTECTIONS WHILE ALLOWING FLEXIBILITY IN THE DESIGN AND OPERATION OF CITY GOVERNMENT**

### FINDINGS

- ✓ The Los Angeles City Charter offers a detailed specification of powers and duties rather than more general guidelines.
- ✓ The complexity of the Charter makes the rules of City Hall inaccessible to the public, and the rules require frequent interpretation.
- ✓ While the Charter has often been described as filled with redundancies and irrelevancies, the actual Charter has less "empty material" than is widely believed. Restructuring the Charter involves difficult decisions on which provisions must be kept in the Charter, and which should be eliminated or moved to the Administrative or Municipal Codes.
- ✓ Worker protections—civil service, pension, and retirement—comprise more than one third of the Charter.

The form of the Charter has been a recurring theme of Commission discussions from the very beginning of its work. The Commissioners heard on numerous occasions that the Charter is too long, that it is too detailed, and that it is a limiting, rather than an enabling document.

The Charter obscures responsibility and accountability. It is difficult even to find a copy of the Charter, let alone read it. Perhaps symbolically, a paperback copy of the Charter costs a member of the public more than sixty dollars.

The Charter's great detail causes the City Attorney to be frequently called upon to interpret the document, imbuing that office with responsibilities not envisioned by the drafters of the 1925 Charter. The Charter, which lacks an overall plan or design, is an ineffective guide to the actual operations of City government. The day-to-day operations at City Hall are built from a mixture of Charter provisions and ordinances. The Charter therefore does not help the people to affix responsibility for government actions.





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Furthermore, the form of the Charter may contribute to bureaucratic delays, and to inefficiency in government. The Commission has heard that City contracts are unusually long in Los Angeles, and that the Charter plays a role in the creation of excessive paperwork. At the very least, the Charter does not discourage paperwork, because it provides so many reasons to add material to public documents.

Even the *perception* that the Charter is complex and limiting has consequences. It is too easy to say that the Charter forced a particular government action, or prevented an alternative from being adopted.

No one intended the Charter to be the way that it is today. The Charter grew and grew, as amendments were made to provisions, and then amendments were made to those amendments. The growth of the Charter developed a momentum of its own. But the result is that a system originally designed to reflect the citizen role prized by the Progressives has become one in which only those with great experience or access know how to make the system work.

On September 10, 1997, the Commission adopted a resolution calling for a more general Charter and directed staff to explore what portions of the Charter should be saved, moved, or eliminated.

It is easy to see how big and bulky the Charter is, but deciding what should stay and what should go is no easy matter. Commission research has found that there is less "empty material" than has been widely believed. There are difficult issues embedded in the debate over the Charter's form. These include civil service and pension systems, City departments and commissions, and detailed protections for core constituencies.

Provisions that identify the City's key officials, the method for their selection, and the limits of their authority comprise about 10% of the current Charter. More than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the Charter consists of detailed provisions concerning Pension and Retirement benefits for City workers and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Charter concerns the organization of



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and duties of specific City departments. Threshold decisions must be made concerning what subject matters the Charter should cover. Particular Charter provisions (such as the selection method for the Chief of Police) may also be important to the people. Once the appropriate subjects for the Charter are identified, relevant provisions may be further clarified and streamlined.

## ➤ **RELATED ISSUES**

Changing the form of the Charter will significantly influence other Charter decisions. For example, the Commission's consultant on financial management, the Government Finance Officers Association, recommended the creation of a Department of Finance. If such a Department were created, an issue remains whether it should be established in the Charter or by ordinance. Detailed descriptions of departments in the Charter, as they currently exist, would suggest the need for details on financial management. Less detail regarding departments would suggest less detail on financial management.

In some of the most sensitive Charter issues, the decision on the form of the Charter will be critical. Civil service and pension provisions comprise more than one-third of the Charter and help account for the Charter's length and detail. The Commission's decision on whether to keep these provisions in the Charter, move them to new Charter sections, or move them into the Administrative Code will determine the framework by which residents of Los Angeles, today and in the future, make decisions on issues affecting City workers.

In effect, all of the issues in *Road To Decision* will be influenced by the form of the document. Each proposal for change in the Charter will be evaluated in terms of the decision on the structure of the Charter itself.





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## ➤ **KEY DECISIONS—OBJECTIVE ONE**

- Should departments be maintained in current form, kept in the Charter but with less detail, or removed from the Charter? Should some departments (e.g., proprietary departments, police, planning) be treated differently than other departments? Should new departments be added to the Charter, and if so, at what level of detail should they be treated?
- Should pension and civil service systems be kept in the Charter, moved to a different section of the Charter, moved to the Administrative Code, or replaced with a general statement of policy?
- Should the Charter have a preamble and/or a statement of rights and responsibilities of the people?

## **OBJECTIVE ONE MEETING DATES**

**FEBRUARY 11, 1998, 6 PM**

**FEBRUARY 25, 1998, 1 PM**



## OBJECTIVE TWO

TO CLARIFY THE ROLES OF KEY CITY OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL, SO THAT THEIR POWERS ARE APPROPRIATE TO THEIR TASKS, AND THE PUBLIC CAN CLEARLY HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE

### FINDINGS

- ✓ While the Mayor of Los Angeles confronts significant limitations on his or her ability to manage the operations of City government, the Office of the Mayor is not as weak as has often been asserted. The Mayor's powers are little understood and often exercised out of public view.
- ✓ Although the City Council is very powerful in Los Angeles government, and is seen by many constituents as a safeguard against bureaucracies, the Council's authority is not defined in a manner that maximizes its responsiveness or effectiveness.
- ✓ Through voter approved Charter amendments the powers of the independent City commissions, an innovative feature of the 1925 Charter, have been reduced over the years relative to the Mayor, the Council, and general managers of departments.

The debate over the allocation of power at City Hall has largely been built around a simple conception: the Mayor's office is too weak and the City Council is too strong. This portrait is incomplete.

While there are serious impediments to the Mayor's ability to manage City operations, the Los Angeles Mayor's office is not weak. In comparison to many other cities, the Mayor of Los Angeles has considerable power, although still well short of mayoral powers in New York City and Chicago. The Mayor is especially powerful in the budget process. This view of mayoral power in Los Angeles has been confirmed by a recent report on the Charter produced by the RAND Corporation.

But the City Council does have extraordinary powers that compete with and, at times, overshadow the Mayor. A wide range of formal and informal powers, combined with a tradition of deference to fellow Council members, has added to the role of the Council as the "governing body" of the City as specified in the Charter. Since 1991, the Council has had the power to overturn decisions of City commissions under the voter-approved "Prop. 5."





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While this Prop. 5 power has been rarely used (with only 31 reversals of commission decisions since Prop. 5's passage), the threat of Prop. 5 action provides considerable leverage. Prop. 5 adds to the Council's existing influence in zoning issues; certain decisions by the Board of Zoning Appeals can be appealed to the Council, and the Council can use Prop. 5 to review all other Board decisions.

In Los Angeles, the ability of the public to hold their leaders accountable is limited. Councilmembers are very powerful, but their power is exercised in ways that can be difficult for the public to track. The Mayor has considerable power, but faces obstacles in managing City departments. The Mayor's role is further obscured by the intervening level of City commissions. Since the Mayor appoints commissioners, mayoral decisions can be filtered through commissions that are in theory independent. In neither case does the public have a clear view of its leaders utilizing their Charter-given powers to the fullest.

Some Los Angeles Mayors have found that an alliance with the City Council can compensate for limitations on their powers over the operations of government. The ability to build Mayor-Council coalitions is a valuable asset for a Mayor, and contributes to effective governance. Other Mayors have been effective at going around the Council. But a better arrangement would allow the typical Mayor, who is neither a master coalition-builder nor adept at finding ways around the Council, to be an effective and accountable executive.

A widely discussed notion is that the best way to align the powers of the Mayor and the Council is to restrict the Council to "legislative" powers, leaving "administrative" powers to the Mayor. But this view also has weaknesses. City councils, especially in the Western states, have a long tradition of acting as governing bodies. The members of the Los Angeles City Council are expected by their constituents to intervene with administrative departments on their behalf. While the Council may do too much, and in too detailed a manner, restricting the Council solely to a "legislative" role is unrealistic.



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Rather than simply assuming that the Mayor should handle administration, and the Council legislation, the Charter should be revised to assign powers appropriate to the roles the Mayor and Council can best perform.

## ➤ **RELATED ISSUES**

The role of City commissions depends in part on decisions about Mayor-Council roles, and about the form of the Charter. One way to increase the Mayor's direct role in the operation of City departments is by reducing the role of commissions. Conversely, increasing the power of City commissions in proprietary departments would make the Mayor's role more indirect.

If commissions were eliminated, or made purely advisory, Prop. 5 would become largely irrelevant. But then, another mechanism would be required to allow the Council to hold departments accountable.

Clarifying the roles and powers of the Mayor and Council would help settle the debate over the City Attorney's role. Some argue that the City Attorney's office should split, into an elected prosecutor and a City Attorney appointed by the Mayor. Others oppose that change as a shift in the balance of power and an encouragement for legal struggles at City Hall. In the largest California cities in which a City Attorney is appointed rather than elected, the appointing authority is the City Council. In other major U.S. Cities, the Mayor more typically appoints the City Attorney.

Decisions about the Mayor-Council division of powers will clarify decisions about financial management. The structure of budget offices for the Mayor and the Council depend on what roles each should have in the budget process. The proper role for the elected City Controller's office is influenced by the roles the Mayor and Council play in financial management. Some have suggested splitting the Controller's auditing and accounting functions. Who should direct the crucial "pre-audit": the Controller, the Mayor, or the Council?



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## ➤ **KEY DECISIONS—OBJECTIVE TWO**

- What authority does the Mayor need to effectively manage departments? How should the Mayor's appointment powers be structured?
- What authority does the Council need to hold the Mayor accountable for the operations of government? Should Prop. 5 be retained? What activities of the Council should be taken out of its purview? What additional authority does the Council need so that its powers can be exercised more effectively?
- Given the roles of the Mayor and Council, what should be the roles of the City Attorney and the City Controller?
- Should city commissions be retained, strengthened, or made advisory?
- What should be the role of professional, appointed administrators in the running of the City government?

## **OBJECTIVE TWO MEETING DATES**

**MARCH 11, 1998, 6 PM**

**MARCH 25, 1998, 1 PM**





## OBJECTIVE THREE

### TO INCREASE AND IMPROVE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE CHARTER

#### FINDINGS

- ✓ Los Angeles has a Charter that discourages participation. Election procedures do not make voting easy, and no citywide system of citizen participation has been developed comparable to systems in a number of other cities.
- ✓ Decisions about neighborhood governance are closely linked to decisions about the size and structure of the City Council.
- ✓ No other city has a system of neighborhood governance in which final veto power over land use is lodged in a neighborhood body. Nonetheless, community boards in other cities have developed major influence over planning and land use.
- ✓ Where neighborhood governance has succeeded in cities, there has been a partnership between government and neighborhoods.
- ✓ Participation has different patterns around the City; one size does not fit all.

Limited citizen involvement in politics and government has long been a feature of Los Angeles. While there is more citizen involvement than many realize, the overall picture is still one of civic disengagement. Public life does not draw many participants, and voter turnout is low.

There are many causes other than the Charter for low participation in Los Angeles, including a wealth of alternative activities year-round, very low attention by the local media to civic life, and the confusing division of responsibilities between the City and the County of Los Angeles. But there is reason to believe that the City Charter could play a role in increasing opportunities for citizen participation.

Los Angeles citizens can participate in their government by voting and by directly working on issues important to them. However, the Charter does not actively promote either of these activities. Instead, the current system makes it difficult for citizens to effectively influence government.



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City Council districts in Los Angeles, at more than 230,000 people per member, are the largest in the nation. The size of districts, and the great geographical sprawl of the City, encourage local campaigns to be “wholesale” and media-oriented, rather than the more direct contact of “retail” politics.

The City Council draws boundaries for Council districts, as well as for the LAUSD Board of Education. The Charter does not mandate that Council districts should, when possible, preserve identifiable neighborhoods.

Elections are held in the spring of odd-numbered years, while the better-publicized state and federal elections are held in even-numbered years. The Charter’s detailed provisions do not allow the flexibility to improve election procedures without Charter change.

Some cities rely on residents’ connections with their neighborhoods to involve them in public life. A number of cities have established formal neighborhood organizations to work with city officials. There is no formal, citywide system of citizen participation in Los Angeles (although the development of the General Plan does involve a systematic program of citizen involvement in its development).

Thus, Los Angeles residents have neither an easily accessible electoral system nor a vibrant system of neighborhood democracy. Making the Charter a vehicle for increased citizen participation requires related decisions about elections and about neighborhood governance. The decisions are related because both election changes and the development of neighborhood structures would address the same objective: to increase citizen participation.

The public’s sense of access and influence can be increased either by electoral changes or by new systems of neighborhood governance, or by a combination. Great improvements in electoral structures could reduce the need for neighborhood systems, and vice versa.





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If the size of the City Council were increased, and if Council boundaries were drawn around natural neighborhoods, the design of neighborhood governance structures could reflect both neighborhoods and Council districts. If the current approach to Council boundaries were not changed, boundaries for neighborhood governance would require a choice between neighborhoods or Council districts, where there is a conflict between them.

The most important decision about neighborhood governance is how much power neighborhood bodies should have and over what decisions they should wield power. This debate has polarized those who fear NIMBYism from neighborhood councils, and those who assert that the City government is the enemy of neighborhoods.

A number of cities have constructed systems of neighborhood governance. In some cities, neighborhood boards are appointed. In others, they are elected. While no city offers veto power over land use to neighborhood bodies, some cities have devolved considerable influence to the neighborhood level. In Portland and New York City, for instance, neighborhood boards play an important role in setting City budget priorities and in land-use matters. Successful systems of neighborhood governance depend on creating a cooperative relationship between government and the neighborhoods.

A system of neighborhood governance in Los Angeles would have to reflect the great diversity of communities in the City. Some neighborhoods are intensely concerned about land use. Others want to influence the types of public services the neighborhoods receive. Some communities already have active neighborhood bodies; others would need considerable assistance in getting them underway. Charter flexibility would be particularly important in developing such a new system.



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## ➤ RELATED ISSUES

A clear alignment of power at City Hall is essential to making any participation system work, so that if the people have access, they can effectively use it. The delivery of services is potentially an issue of participation. A more responsive City Council and/or a system of neighborhood governance could improve the current system for accountability in the delivery of services.

While the main issues of participation have involved City Council structure, elections, and neighborhood governance, there is considerable interest in changing the governance of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Proposals have been made to increase citizen participation by making school board membership a full-time position with pay commensurate with other elected officials, and expanding the board.

Neighborhood governance is a new subject yet to be included in the Charter. How specific the Charter should be about a new aspect of City government will be determined in part by decisions on the basic form of the Charter.





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## ➤ **KEY DECISIONS—OBJECTIVE THREE**

- Should the electoral structure of the City Council be changed to increase citizen participation?
- Should City Council boundaries be drawn in a different manner than today?
- Should restructuring be done for the LAUSD Board of Education?
- Should the Charter-defined election rules be changed? Should these changes be specified in detail, or should the changes be left to ordinance?
- Should neighborhood governance be included in the Charter and with what level of detail? Should there be a Department of Neighborhoods in the Charter?
- What powers should any neighborhood bodies included in the Charter have?
- How should boundaries be drawn? Should boards of any neighborhood bodies be elected or appointed, or both?

### **OBJECTIVE THREE MEETING DATES**

**APRIL 8, 1998, 6 PM**

**APRIL 22, 1998, 1 PM**



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## What Would Happen During Deliberations?

During the deliberations phase, the Commission will utilize ideas, testimonies, and other materials gathered over the last nine months to make decisions to reach the three objectives. The end result will be a draft set of recommendations for a revised Charter that will be presented to the public for comment.

## When Will Meetings Take Place?

Over the next four months, the Commission will conduct two meetings per month, each on a Wednesday, one beginning at 6:00 in the evening and one beginning at 1:00 in the afternoon. As always, participation from the public is welcomed and encouraged. Meetings are scheduled to be held at the Department of Water and Power Building, 111 North Hope Street, in the Board Room located on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.

## OVERALL CALENDAR

CHARTER REFORM PHASE	SCHEDULED DATES
<i>Road To Decision</i>	September 1997 to January 1998
<b>Deliberations</b>	<b>February to June 1998</b>
Public Comment and Drafting	June to July 1998
Reconsideration and Redrafting	August 1998 to September 1998
Submit Charter Proposal to Council	September to October 1998
Council Deliberations and Drafting	October to December 1998
Deadline to Instruct City Attorney to Prepare Material for April 1999 Ballot	December 18, 1998

## APPENDIX A: THE 1990s

The 1990s were a decade of significant change for the United States. The economy was strong, and the country was at the height of its power. However, the decade was also marked by the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new era of global conflict.

### THE 1990s: A Decade of Change

The 1990s were a decade of significant change for the United States. The economy was strong, and the country was at the height of its power. However, the decade was also marked by the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new era of global conflict.

### THE 1990s: A Decade of Change

Year	Event
1990	Reagan's final year in office
1991	Gulf War begins
1992	Clinton elected President
1993	Clinton's first year in office
1994	Clinton's second year in office
1995	Clinton's third year in office
1996	Clinton's fourth year in office
1997	Clinton's fifth year in office
1998	Clinton's sixth year in office
1999	Clinton's seventh year in office



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## DELIBERATIONS SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11	COMMISSION MEETING—6 PM
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25	COMMISSION MEETING—1 PM
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11	COMMISSION MEETING—6 PM
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25	COMMISSION MEETING—1 PM
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8	COMMISSION MEETING—6 PM
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22	COMMISSION MEETING—1 PM
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13	COMMISSION MEETING—6 PM
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20 OR MAY 27	COMMISSION MEETING—1 PM
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10	COMMISSION MEETING—6 PM

## HOW TO REACH THE COMMISSION

Telephone: (213) 367-5234

Fax: (213) 367-5164

Web Site: [Http://www.ci.la.ca.us](http://www.ci.la.ca.us)

Mailing Address: City of Los Angeles  
Charter Reform Commission  
111 North Hope Street  
P.O. Box 51111, Room L-33  
Los Angeles, CA 90051





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## DELIBERATIONS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM
Wednesday, June 10	Commission Meeting - 9 AM

## HOW TO REACH THE COMMISSION

Telephone: (415) 321-5224

Fax: (415) 321-5151

The Commission meets in the

Building at the

University of California

1110 University Avenue

P.O. Box 9817, Berkeley, CA

94702-0917